



An Bille um an Dlí Coiriúil (Coimirciú Aosach), 2026
Criminal Law (Adult Safeguarding) Bill 2026

Meabhrán Miniúcháin
Explanatory Memorandum



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2026
CRIMINAL LAW (ADULT SAFEGUARDING) BILL 2026**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Purpose of Bill

The purpose of this Bill is to create specific criminal offences to protect certain adults (“relevant persons”) who require care and who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, exploitation or coercive control.

The Bill also provides for penalties; court orders prohibiting certain offenders from working with relevant persons; publicity orders for care providers convicted of specified offences; anonymity protections; and related procedural provisions.

Provisions of the Bill

Section 1 (Interpretation)

This section defines key terms used in the Bill.

Section 2 (Intentional or reckless abuse, neglect or ill-treatment)

This section creates an offence where a person who provides care for, or lives in the same household as, a relevant person intentionally or recklessly assaults, ill-treats or neglects the relevant person (or causes, procures or allows that to happen) in a manner likely to cause suffering or injury, or seriously affect the person’s wellbeing.

Section 3 (Exposure of relevant person to risk of serious harm or sexual abuse)

This section creates an offence where a person in authority (or otherwise controlling the care arrangements) intentionally or recklessly endangers a relevant person by causing or permitting them to be placed or left in a situation creating a substantial risk of serious harm or sexual abuse, or by failing to take reasonable protective steps while knowing the person is in such a situation.

Section 4 (Coercive control of relevant person)

This section creates an offence of engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour towards a relevant person on a continuous basis where that behaviour causes the person serious harm or has a serious effect (including causing fear that violence will be used, or serious alarm or distress that substantially affects day-to-day activities).

Section 5 (Coercive exploitation of relevant person)

This section creates an offence where a person, by means of controlling or coercive behaviour, causes a relevant person to engage in conduct (or to refrain from conduct) in order to gain a benefit or advantage for the offender or another person. It is irrelevant whether a benefit was actually gained, and consent or acquiescence is not a defence.

Section 6 (Penalties)

This section provides the penalties for offences under sections 2 to 5, including (depending on the offence) imprisonment and/or fines on summary conviction and on conviction on indictment.

Section 7 (Prohibition on working with relevant persons)

This section allows a court, where necessary to protect relevant persons from serious harm, to impose a sentence including a prohibition preventing an “applicable offender” from engaging in specified “relevant work or activity” for a defined period. It also creates offences for breaching the prohibition and includes provisions on variation or discharge and related definitions.

Section 8 (Publicity orders)

In order to protect the identity of victims, this section permits a court to make a publicity order where a care provider is found guilty of an offence under section 2, 3 or 5. A publicity order may require the care provider to publish or broadcast specified information (including the offender’s identity, the offence and the sentence) and to notify the relevant regulator(s) and, where required, the Minister. Failure to comply is an offence.

Section 9 (Anonymity of relevant persons and others)

In order to protect the identity of victims, this section creates an offence of publishing, distributing or broadcasting information (including images) likely to identify the alleged relevant person, the accused or a dependent person where a person is charged with an offence under sections 2 to 5, subject to specified exceptions and the court’s power to direct publication in the interests of justice.

Section 10 (Proceedings for offences)

This section provides that proceedings for offences under the Bill may only be brought by, or with the consent of, the Director of Public Prosecutions. It also provides extended time limits for commencing summary proceedings (subject to an overall long-stop), and includes provisions addressing offences by bodies corporate and related persons.

Section 11 (Amendment of the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012)

This section amends Schedule 2 to the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to include offences under sections 2 to 5 of this Bill within the list of relevant offences for the purposes of that Act.

Section 12 (Review of operation of Act)

This section requires the Minister to carry out a review of the operation of the Act not later than 3 years after the relevant provision comes into operation.

Section 13 (Expenses)

This section provides that any costs associated with administering the Act should be met from within existing expenditure allocations.

Section 14 (Short title and commencement)

This section provides for the short title and for commencement by ministerial order, including commencement on different days for different purposes or provisions.

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Bealtaine, 2026.*

